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Cosculluela, Manuel

Cuban 'Agent' Says U.S. Police Aides Urged Torture

By ALAN RIDING

Special to The New York Times

HAVANA, Aug. 4—A Cuban, who said that he had infiltrated the Central Intelligence Agency as a "double agent" and was sent to work in Uruguay, charged today that United States police advisers routinely recommended the use of torture for interrogation purposes there in the early 1970's.

Manuel Hevia Cosculluela, 44 years old, who said that he worked for the C.I.A. between 1962 and 1970, charged that an American official, Dan A. Mitrione, personally tortured four beggars to death with electric shocks as part of his interrogation course for Uruguayan policemen in 1970.

Mr. Mitrione, head of the United States Agency for International Development's public safety program in Montevideo, was killed by Uruguay's Tupamaro guerrillas following his kidnapping in 1970. At the time, the State Department denied charges by leftists that Mr. Mitrione had participated in the torture of political prisoners.

"If you ask me whether any American official participated in torture, I'd say yes, Dan Mitrione participated," Mr. Hevia said at a news conference. "If you ask me whether there were interrogations, I'd say no, because the unfortunate beggars who were being tortured had no way of answering because they were asked no questions. They were merely guinea pigs to show the effect of electric shock on different parts of the human body."

Not Merely Work of an Individual

"But there has been a lot of talk about Mitrione," he went on. "This is wrong because it suggests that his behavior was the excess of an individual. Mitrione represented the program of the American mission, and Mitrione was only carrying out policy."

The Agency for International Development's public safety programs, advising police forces around the world, were terminated by Congress in 1975 after criticism of them in Congress.

Mr. Hevia is the seventh Cuban identified as a "double agent" to be presented publicly this week to coincide with the 11th International Youth Festival, which is being attended by 22,000 leftists from 140 countries. But while six of those identified as "double agents" reportedly worked with the C.I.A. through previous infiltrations of Cuban exile groups, Mr. Hevia is the only one said to have worked in an area unrelated to Cuba.

In a book published today, titled "Passport 1133," Mr. Hevia said that he was first contacted on behalf of the C.I.A. early in 1962. He consulted Cuban security officials, Mr. Hevia added, and was told to cooperate.

Asylum, Then C.I.A. Recruitment

In November 1962, he sought asylum in the Uruguayan Embassy here and seven months later went into exile in Miami, where he was formally recruited and trained by the C.I.A. and sent to Uruguay. After working under cover, he said he began working in the public safety division of the Agency for International Development in Montevideo, answering directly to the office's assistant director, William Cantrell, said to be a C.I.A. operative.

"The American aim was to create an entirely new national intelligence network, working through the police and eliminating politically those army officers who were considered too nationalistic and unwilling to allow an American takeover of intelligence," he said.

"Cantrell called me to Montevideo and told me that a new public safety director would be bringing instructions on new courses of interrogation," Mr. Hevia continued. "Cantrell said that the new man, Mitrione, was not part of 'our program'—he never referred directly to the C.I.A.—but had worked very closely with 'our program' in Brazil."

Mr. Hevia, who attended high school at Watertown, Conn., in the early 50's and speaks perfect English, said that the interrogation courses brought by Mr. Mitrione involved the use of electric shocks, special chemicals and modern psychological techniques against detainees.

Academic Approach to Torture

"The special horror of the course was its academic, almost clinical atmosphere," he recalled. "Mitrione was a perfectionist. He was coldly efficient, he insisted on economy of effort. His motto was: 'The right pain in the right place at the right time.' A premature death, he would say, meant that the technique had failed."

Apart from the experiments on the four beggars, the Cuban official said, Uruguayan policemen attending the course would occasionally be taken to Montevideo police headquarters to watch real interrogations. "Happily, I only witnessed two of these real interrogations," he added.

Early in 1970, Mr. Hevia said that he received instructions from Havana to prepare to return. "The last time I talked to Mitrione was in his home one evening over drinks," he recalled. "He said that he considered interrogation to be a complex art. First you have to soften up the detainee with blows and the usual abuse. The objective was to humiliate the victim, separating him from reality, making him feel defenseless. No questions, just blows and insults. Then just silent blows."

C.I.A. Refuses Comment

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4—A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency, asked for a response to the charges made in Havana, said that the C.I.A. did not customarily comment on allegations about operational activities.

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Passport 1133

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